

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 SAA-02 SSM-03 HA-05 MCT-01
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8624
INFO AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 3792

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, LE, SY
SUBJECT: VIEWS OF GREEK CATHOLIC PATRIARCH MAXIMOS HAKIM

1. CHARGE CALLED ON GREEK CATHOLIC PATRIARCH MAXIMOS HAKIM
JULY 3 TO OFFER CONDOLENCES OVER BEKAA MURDERS AND TO
DISCUSS LATEST SITUATION IN LEBANON. AFTER EXPRESSING
APPRECIATION FOR VISIT, PATRIARCH TOLD CHARGE THAT PAST
FEW DAYS HAD BEEN EXTREMELY DEPRESSING. GREEK CATHOLIC
COUNCIL HAD HEARD NUMBER OF WITNESSES REGARDING BEKAA
INCIDENT, BUT COULD COME TO NO CLEAR CONCLUSION. SEVERAL
WITNESSES, FOR EXAMPLE, CLAIMED THEY HAD SEEN MEN IN
SYRIAN ARMY UNIFORMS ROUNDING UP VICTIMS. ON CLOSER
INTERROGATION, HOWEVER, THEY HAD ALL ADMITTED NOT TO HAVE
PERSONALLY SEEN WHAT THEY DESCRIBED BUT TO HAVE BEEN TOLD
IT BY OTHERS (GENERALLY PHALANGISTS) WHO HAD SENT THEM
TO COUNCIL TO TESTIFY. ONE BOY PRESENTED CREDIBLE ACCOUNT
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OF HAVING BEEN SLEEPING ON HIS ROOF WHEN GROUP OF MEN CAME
TO TAKE HIM. HIS MOTHER CLAIMED HE NOT HOME. BOY HAD
IDENTIFIED SPEAKER AMONG MEN AS CLEARLY LEBANESE BY ACCENT.

2. WHILE THERE WERE OBVIOUSLY SOME LEBANESE INVOLVED,
PATRIARCH SAID, HE ALSO DID NOT SEE HOW SYRIANS COULD NOT
HAVE BEEN AWARE OF THE OPERATION WHICH HAD INVOLVED

SEVERAL HUNDRED MEN. HE SAID PRESIDENT SARKIS HAD PROMISED HIM TOTAL INVESTIGATION, AND HE WOULD BE RETURNING TO LEBANON WITHIN NEXT FEW DAYS TO HEAR RESULTS. PATRIARCH SAID HE COULD NOT BELIEVE EITHER FRANGIEH OR PIERRE GEMAYEL, BOTH OF WHOM HE KNEW WELL WERE INVOLVED IN THIS INCIDENT, NOR COULD COUNCIL CONCLUDE ANYTHING CLEARLY FROM THOSE KILLED AND THOSE RELEASED. SOME WERE PHALANGISTS, SOME NLP, AND OTHER UNAFFILIATED. AS FAR AS HE KNEW, NONE HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN IH DEN INCIDENT.

3. RESULT, HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO PATRIARCH, WAS THAT MANY YOUNG GREEK CATHOLICS IN PHALANGE AND AHRAR MILITIA UNITS WERE NOW IN THE FOREFRONT OF FIGHTING AGAINST SYRIANS IN BEIRUT. SECOND RESULT WAS THAT GREEK CATHOLICS WERE ALMOST ALL MOVING OUT OF FRANGIEH-CONTROLLED VILLAGES INTO OTHER AREAS. HE NOTED THAT SLOGAN WAS APPEARING ON WALLS AND OTHER PUBLIC PLACES IN NORTH LEBANON: "A PLUS B EQUALS T" (AMINE PLUS BESHIR EQUALS TONY). THERE IS AN OLD LEBANESE SAYING, HE QUOTED SADLY, THAT WHEN MARONITES FIGHT AMONG THEMSELVES IT IS THE GREEK CATHOLICS WHO SUFFER.

4. PATRIARCH SAID HE HAD NOT CONTACTED SARG NOR BEEN CONTACTED BY ANY SYRIAN OFFICE SINCE HIS RETURN TO DAMASCUS. HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT HE THOUGHT THERE WAS MORE PRESIDENT ASSAD COULD DO. HE COULD, FOR EXAMPLE, INVITE

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VARIOUS CHRISTIAN LEADERS TO DAMASCUS TO DISCUSS SITUATION. INSTEAD, SYRIA SEEMED TO BE TRYING TO MINIMIZE ITS INVOLVEMENT IN THE PHALANGE-FRANGIEH DISPUTE. PELLETREAU

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